

Headmistress Indicted for Murder in Diet Doctor's Death

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WHITE PLAINS, N.Y. (AP)—A grand jury Tuesday indicted Jean Harris, the former headmistress of a posh girls' school, on a charge of second-degree murder in the shooting death of Dr. Herman Tarnower, developer of the "Scarsdale Diet."

Harris, 57, a divorcee and Tarnower's companion for 15 years, was told of the indictment at a hospital in Westchester County where she has

been undergoing psychiatric and medical treatment.

Harris had told police that she went to Tarnower's home in Purchase, N.Y., on March 10 to persuade him to kill her and that therefore she did not intend to cause his death.

Dist. Atty. Carl Vergari said the grand jury considered both murder and the lesser charge of manslaughter and "found sufficient evidence to

charge murder."

Joel Aurnou, Harris' lawyer, said Tuesday he still believes the killing was not intentional.

"Vergari got his indictment and I've got the letter," said Aurnou, a reference to the so-called "Scarsdale letter" that is believed to contain the reason behind Harris' trip to New York from her home in Virginia the day of the slaying.

The rambling, emotional 10-page document written by Harris to Tarnower the day he was shot is said to detail her distress at the course of their relationship.

Two days after the shooting, Aurnou claimed the letter from the Scarsdale post office before Vergari's investigators could get there with a court order.

Aurnou said he will use the letter

to try to persuade a trial jury that his client was under "an extreme emotional disturbance" at the time of the killing.

Vergari said the slaying resulted from a love triangle as Tarnower's affections for Harris waned in favor of his nurse, Lynn Tryforos.

Tryforos, 37, dined with Tarnower, 69, at his home hours before his death, but left before the shooting.

Vergari would not say whether Tryforos testified before the grand jury.

Harris was also indicted on a charge of criminal possession of a

weapon, a .32-caliber revolver she purchased two years ago in Virginia. The prosecution said ballistic tests have established it was the murder weapon.

The former headmistress of the exclusive Madeira school in Greenway, Va., Harris helped Tarnower with his best-selling book "The Complete Scarsdale Diet," which has grossed \$11 million. She is listed first in the book's acknowledgements.

Harris, who is free on \$40,000 bail, could get 25 years to life in prison if she is convicted of murder. Vergari said he expected the trial to begin "by late fall."